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## **Student Teachers' Task Perceptions of Democracy in their Future Profession – a Critical Discourse Analysis of Students' Course Texts**

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*Abstract: The education system is still important for establishing and maintaining democracy in society. In relation to this, it is reasonable to suggest that teachers' different interpretations of their mission to teach for democracy will influence their teaching practices. The purpose of this paper is to shed light on student teachers' task perceptions as a dimension of their professional role to teach for democracy in school. An analysis of Swedish student teachers' course texts written as an assignment during a course focusing on democracy is conducted using critical discourse analysis as an analytical tool. The task perceptions are described according to two main discourses: as narrow and broad approaches to teaching for democracy. These two approaches are further analyzed in terms of two corresponding strategies for teacher professionalism: outside-in professionalism and inside-out professionalism. The result partly confirms earlier studies of student teachers, where narrow approaches to democracy have been found to be most common.*

### **Introduction**

*Hence, from the sufferings and chaos of the war came the demand of people's sovereignty and individual's right to co-influence in the state and social life. Democracy came to be the general key word for social development. (SOU, 1946:31, p. 14)*

This paper addresses student teachers' task perceptions in relation to the educational aspiration to teach for democracy, using Swedish teacher education as a case. The motivation for introducing democracy as an ideological starting point for state governing and education in many western countries can be traced back to the traumas of the First and Second World Wars (cf. Englund, 1986; Liedman, 1997; McCowan, 2009). Accordingly, the ways in which totalitarian ideologies stressed the necessity for blind obedience, the existence of humans and non-humans, weak and strong and the need to silence or extinguish those who were considered as weak or different from the human norm, can be said to be important indicators for altering the very political foundation on which many societies rested at that time (cf. Arendt, 2004; Ofstad, 2012). In relation to this, a central idea that was established in the wake of the war(s) was that war and peace are not primarily created through external devices, but through people's perceptions or mindsets. Indeed, when the UNESCO Constitution [United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization] was written in 1945, it was emphasized that: "[t]he governments of the State Parties to this Constitution on behalf of their peoples declare: That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defense of peace must be constructed" (UNESCO, 1945). Similar ideas have been stressed in

research on social justice and education (see for instance Eisner, 1994; Fraser, 2009; Greene, 2001; Nussbaum, 1995).

Consequently, ever since the end of World War II, teachers in Sweden and in other countries have been expected to foster democratic citizens in school and in society (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Dahlstedt & Olson, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Ekman & Todosijevic, 2003; (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Dahlstedt & Olson, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Edling, 2015a; Ekman & Todosijevic, 2003; Mooney Simmie & Edling, 2016; SOU, 1946:31; Zyngier, 2016; Zyngier, Traverso, & Murriello, 2015). This is not an easy task, especially as the meaning of democratic citizenship has changed over time. In Sweden, the desire to foster democratic citizens can be said to have oscillated between fostering a good workforce and fostering a democratic mindset amongst young people in their everyday lives. Whilst the emphasis on fostering a good workforce solely focuses on providing students with objective knowledge about democratic procedures and principles, the fostering of a democratic mindset broadens the focus of democracy to encompass knowledge about other people's living conditions and circumstances (cf. Ekman & Todosijevic, 2003; Englund, 2003). Hence, it is not a question of claiming that knowledge about principles and procedures *is not* necessary, but rather that it is not sufficient to address social challenges. In Sweden, teachers' democratic task involves an increased awareness of how the conditions of social relations for promoting equity increased with the launching of the Discrimination Act in 2006 and the strengthening of § 6 in the Education Act relating to the prevention of violating treatment (Edling & Frelin, 2015).

It could still be claimed that the education system is still a cornerstone for the establishment and maintenance of democracy (cf. Dewey 1916; Englund 1996). Currently, the ability of teachers to make judgments in their everyday work, based on their perceptions of practice and previous scientific knowledge, is emphasized in Swedish policy documents for education (Skolverket, 2014). In the endeavor to stimulate well-grounded judgments amongst teachers, and subsequently student teachers, theory that pays attention to equity and difference (Allan, 2014; Edling 2015b; Gallagher, 2014) plays an important role in opening up new ways of understanding the world (Biesta, Allan, & Edwards, 2014; Hodson, Smith, & Brown, 2011; Sjølie, 2014). In Sweden, student teachers are expected to acquire subject knowledge as well as general core knowledge about teaching and learning. Two of the seven core subjects are about understanding the foundations of democracy, conflict resolution, and social relations (Jansson, 2011). Thus, in Sweden, student teachers taking courses on democratic values are provided with theories (and strategies) that are designed to help them to navigate and make well-grounded judgments.

In relation to this, it is reasonable to suggest that teachers' different interpretations of their task to teach for democracy will influence their teaching and their relations with students (Schön, 1983), in that an important part of the school curricula depends on how teachers conceptualize the meaning of their teaching (Cuban, 1992; Gudmundsdottir, 1990). In this paper we approach the subject of student teachers' task perceptions by analyzing their written responses to the content and experience of a course on democratic values in school with a focus on the role of the teachers. The purpose of the paper is to shed light on student teachers' task perceptions as a dimension of their professional role to teach democracy in school.

The paper is divided into four parts. The intention with part one is to present the central concepts in the investigation and to give an overview of previous research on student teachers' task perceptions and democracy. Part two outlines the methodology, i.e. the use of critical discourse analysis, the empirical material, and the context of the study. The results of the study are presented in part three. Part four presents a tentative conclusion of the findings.

## Background

In this section four interrelated areas are explored, namely the teaching profession and professionalism, teacher judgment and task perception, democracy and education, as well as previous empirical knowledge about student teachers' task perceptions and democracy.

### The Teaching Profession and Professionalism

How the teaching profession is conceived greatly affects what can be expected from teachers and, consequently, how teacher educational courses are structured and planned. Generally, two major strategies have vied for attention, namely a universal (technical) strategy and a practice-oriented (intellectual) strategy. The universal (technical) strategy is largely based on a strong belief in the powers of objective measurement as a guide for action in school, whereas the practice-oriented (intellectual) approach regards objective measurements as important yet insufficient. Teachers and student teachers also need to interpret a practice that is in constant movement with the aid of previous knowledge and various theories (cf. Ball, 1995; Colnerud & Granström, 2002; Popkewitz, 1994). Contrary to the technical means of teachers' work, the intellectual dimension of the teaching profession requires teachers to broaden their perceptions through theory (Ball, 1995). Depending on where the emphasis has been placed in the relationship between theory and practice at Swedish teacher training institutions, over the years the education has changed from treating practice as separate from theory and at other times regarding practice and theory as entangled entities (Linné, 2010).

Depending on how teachers' work is conceptualized, two basic kinds of professionalism can be interpreted. The first one is labeled as outside-in-professionalism characterized by teachers responding to external and standardized demands. In this sense, teachers as professionals are connected to standardized outcomes, such as tests, representing a general and universal teaching practice. The second, which is labeled as inside-out-professionalism, is instead characterized by a teaching practice that is complex and changeable, depending on the qualified judgment of the teacher. It is not a question of defining the two forms of professionalism, but rather discussing where the limits of teachers' responsibilities are to be drawn (Stanley & Stronach, 2013). Central to inside-out-professionalism is teacher judgment (e.g. Frelin 2014).

### Teachers' Judgments and Task Perceptions

From an inside-out-professionalism perspective, it is important to understand how teachers' judgments are influenced by their knowledge and their beliefs (Frelin, 2010). A broad range of research indicates that teachers' judgments cannot only be approached from a knowledge point of view (see for instance Carlgren, 2009; Jackson, 1990/1968; Lee S. Schulman, 1983; Lee S. Schulman, 2004) or regarded as an isolated phenomenon (Pajares, 1992). In order to develop quality of judgment as a dimension of inside-out-professionalism, Schön (1983) argues that teachers need to practice their reflections and in this context introduces the concepts *naming* and *framing*. In other words, before teachers can make judgments they have to name what it is they are basing their judgments on, which says something fundamental about what is excluded/included in that specific way of framing the world. The constant process of naming and framing the content of educational practice is also dependent on teachers' task perceptions (Schön 1983). Teachers' and student teachers' task

perceptions, i.e. how they understand what their tasks and duties are, are related to both kinds of professionalism. A task perception can thus be oriented towards fulfilling external demands or characterized by teachers' judgments of complex teaching situations. Kelchtermans (2009) defines task perception as "the normative component of teachers' self-understanding" (p. 262) and focuses on how teachers understand what their tasks and duties are. Student teachers' views of what education for democracy should include, i.e. their interpretations of the task to teach for democracy, could therefore indicate how their teaching will take shape in school (Zyngier et al 2015; Zyngier 2016). This paper focuses on student teachers' task perceptions in terms of teaching for democracy.

### **Broad and Narrow Democracy**

Traditionally, democracy has often been approached in terms of contrasts, e.g. thin versus thick or strong (e.g. Benjamin Barber, 2003; Zyngier, 2016), or shallow versus deep (Furman & Shields, 2005). The purpose of such distinctions has been to point to the differences between parliamentary principles and formal procedures on the one hand, and the equity consequences of people's everyday actions and choices on the other (Carr, 2008; Green, 1999). Those arguing for a broad democracy do not claim that laws and regulations are not necessary, but that they are not sufficient to deal with the many moral and justice issues that are central to democracy. In Swedish educational policies the broad dimension of democracy is strongly emphasized as the need for democratic values to permeate actions and other equity dimensions included in the Discrimination Act, and the juridical requirement to oppose other violations. This implies that there is a normative dimension in teachers' work that also influences the content of courses in Swedish teacher education.

Our examination of student teachers' different task conceptions of democracy in terms of narrow and broad orientations to democracy is not done in a dualistic way. By dualism means here the inclination of dividing the world in two separate pieces that are placed in opposite to one and other in a hierarchical fashion (Lloyd, 1993). Accordingly, narrow and broad democracy should not be regarded as opposites, but rather as a means of understanding the scope of the democratic focus. Indeed, rather than highlighting some of the conceptions of democracy as valuable or not, we approach democracy at both levels for analytical purposes (e.g. Edling 2015a). When democracy mainly refers to parliamentary principles (sometimes isolated) and formal procedures, we approach this as narrow democracy. Likewise, when conceptions of democracy focus on the complexities and dilemmas in social life in the school context, we approach it as broad democracy. By using the terms broad and narrow, the intention is to address two basic ways in which student teachers approach the task of teaching for democracy, i.e. their task perceptions corresponding to narrow democracy and broad democracy respectively. A common meeting point, albeit with overlapping significance due to their different purposes, for broad democracy and inside-out professionalism is the necessity of making deliberative judgments (Barber, 2003; Edling, 2015a; Frelin 2014) about relations and dilemmas of values, groups and individuals, rather than relying on already established norms and methods.

### **Survey of the Research Field**

Earlier research shows that a number of factors condition the ways in which teachers approach the task of teaching for democratic citizenship. Osler (2011) and Rapoport (2010) observe a lack of reflection on the concept of citizenship amongst teachers. Watson

(reference?) expresses similar sentiments in her study of religious education teachers in Great Britain. Other studies have revealed a lack of such attention in teacher education and point out that pressure of work, such as a heavy workload (Wilkins, 2003), is an obstacle to the teaching of democratic citizenship. However, in her study, Garcia Vélez (2012) finds support for a global, cosmopolitan view of democratic citizenship, including human rights and social justice, amongst teachers of Spanish. Myers (2007) reports that politically active teachers tend to make use of their experiences in their teaching about and for democracy. Other studies highlight that teacher education can provide tools for *doing democracy* in teacher education by introducing alternatives in order to breach the dualism between theory and practice through critical theory (Fenomore-Smith, 2004), by questioning cultural hegemonies (Banks, 2001) in teacher education practice, or by including students from culturally diverse groups (Mirra & Morrell, 2011).

Empirical research focusing on student teachers' views of democracy is so far scant. Bernmark-Ottosson (2009) compared two groups of students in the social sciences and teacher education and found that student teachers tended to value conceptions of democracy that focus on formal and legal procedures, whereas the non-teacher group focused on conceptions emphasizing a sense of participation and direct influence in political decisions. There is also evidence to show that students with a study-orientation towards memorizing and learning separate facts tend to approach democracy in terms of formal and legal procedures, compared to students with a more holistic, in-depth approach.

Zyngier (2016) studied Australian student teachers' beliefs about democracy and found that the dominant pattern was characterized by "thin" notions of democracy, i.e. beliefs that emphasize personal freedom and free elections, rather than paying attention to dimensions of social power and the recognition of difference. Zyngier also found support for the dominant pattern that democracy was not mainly about engaging with and changing society, but learning *about* democracy (cf. Benjamin Barber, 1997). Similarly, in a comparative study of Argentinian and Australian contexts, Zyngier, Traverso & Murriello (2015) concluded that a recurrent view of democracy resembled a thin conception of democracy rather than a thick version. Carr (2008) also found support for the dominance of thin notions of democracy and further suggested a teacher education based on democratic practice. A clear tendency to a technicist view, emphasizing accountability based on the national curriculum, in teaching for democracy is reported in Dadvan's (2015) interview study of Iranian teacher students.

Doerre Ross and Yeager (1999) analyzed 29 student papers as part of a course in which student teachers had to select three or four aims for elementary school students to develop. The result of the study indicated that high competence emphasized pluralism, equity and justice, while medium or low competence successively lacked such dimensions. The authors rated 3 papers as high, 8 as medium and 18 as low. They concluded by doubting that "taking these courses or doing well in them necessarily broadened their knowledge or led to more sophisticated understandings of democracy" (p. 265).

In sum, former research has pointed to the lack of any profound reflections on democracy amongst practicing teachers and student teachers. Some studies have focused on the possibilities offered by action research to strengthen democracy in teacher education. Other studies have focused on student teachers' interpretations of democracy, foremost corresponding to a narrow and broad democracy as outlined above. However, as far as we can ascertain, no other study has addressed how student teachers approach the task of teaching for democracy and what their perceptions of it are. This study contributes to earlier studies by addressing these two dimensions and also includes the issue of teacher judgment in the task of teaching for democracy in school.

## Teacher Education for Democracy in Sweden

In Sweden, teacher education is regulated by national regulating policies where the two most important are referred to as *The Swedish Higher Educational Act* and *Higher Education ordinance*. *The Swedish Higher Education Act* provides with general directives about Swedish higher education that the institutions are obliged to follow whereas the Higher Education Ordinance supplements these general directives with more specific aims and guidance for various programs, including those embedded within teacher education.<sup>1</sup> Various programs for teacher education in the Higher Education Ordinance are in dialogue with the policies for Swedish school and pre-school system. This implies that since the School Act and Discrimination Act stress the need for teachers to work with knowledge, democratic values, and equal opportunities for students this is also reflected in the teacher education programs.

As one of seven general objectives, teacher education at all levels should include the “history, organization and conditions of the school as well as values, including the fundamental democratic values and human rights” (National Policy of Teacher Education 2011). The local courses provided in teacher education are obliged to follow the objectives in the national curricula and the teacher education program. Since the objectives are general and compendious, in each teacher education institution the objects are interpreted and further regulated in the local course syllabus. The course focused on in this paper is described in the methodology section below.

## Methodology

In April 2016 a group of 59 student teachers at a university in Sweden took part in the course entitled *The school's democratic mission from a value perspective*. Three teachers were involved in the course; –two of whom are the authors of this paper. At the time, the student teachers were studying to become high school teachers and were taking courses linked to general core subjects, after having previously taken courses in their particular subjects at other universities. The course in question was common for all student teachers at high school level and focused on teaching for democracy.<sup>2</sup>

In order to assess the aims of the course, two kinds of examinations were created: a) a verbal presentation in which certain aims were discussed in relation to a novel the students had read, and b) a 5-page written essay divided into three sections, the first addressing gender justice and the second addressing theories on democracy education in school. In this paper, the last question in the written examination is analyzed and is formulated as: “How are your thoughts about democracy interlaced with the democratic ideals that teachers are expected to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.uhr.se/en/start/laws-and-regulations/Laws-and-regulations/> [180612]

<sup>2</sup> The aims of the course were as follows. *Knowledge and understanding*: to describe national and international equality and gender equality goals in relation to school governance documents and current legislation; to clarify how the concepts of power and democracy relate to discrimination such as gender, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity and disability, and how this affects the school's educational activities and objectives. *Skills and abilities*: to identify and problematize social and personal understandings of democracy and shared values in order to better understand and support young people's identity development towards becoming democratic citizens; to communicate and implement the school's core values; to demonstrate the ability to create opportunities for all students to learn and develop. *Values and attitudes*: from an intersectional approach to different perspective areas (gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, and functionality) relate to societal and individual democracy and social positions in relation to professional self-awareness and empathy; to express self-awareness and empathy.

pay attention to today?” In particular, the question measures the following aims: to identify and problematize the social and personal understandings of democracy and shared values in order to better understand and support young people’s identity development towards becoming democratic citizens and to express self-awareness and empathy. The latter aim was discussed with the students before the examination, when it was also stressed that it was important for them to be nuanced in their reasoning, i.e. explain how they understood it.

The analysis of the student teachers’ texts on democracy was conducted using critical discourse analysis (henceforth known as CDA). This involves a careful examination of words and semiotics to study whether and how language patterns occur and to discuss their plausible consequences for social life (van Dijk, 1995). In accordance with Fairclough (1992, 2000), we maintain that CDA makes it possible for us to understand the dialectical relation between thought and action, i.e. in this case how student teachers comprehend the democratic mission in their profession and how this might affect their everyday work. CDA makes it possible to include agency and larger patterns in the analysis, in the sense that it allows a movement between an individual’s verbal expressions of their thoughts/actions in relation to democracy and the teaching profession’s responses to overall patterns of thought/action that are generated in comparisons of the language of the whole group.

Consequently, Fairclough’s (1995, 2004, 2013) CDA is applied as a theory and methodology to interpret and translate the student teachers’ writings. What is especially studied in the material is how the student teachers link their understandings of democracy to their role as future teachers. As indicated above, 59 students took this exam and their written texts (words and semiotics) were read, re-read, coded and analyzed in three steps: a) text analysis (description), b) processing analysis (interpretation), and c) social analysis (explanation) (Fairclough, 1995). The process can be linked to the following questions: How do the student teachers describe the notion of democracy? (description); How do the student teachers describe the relationship between democracy and their role as future teachers? (description); Are there similarities and differences between the student teachers, and if so, what are they? (interpretations, discursive patterns); How can the student teachers’ descriptions be understood in relation to previous research and theories about democracy? (explanation)

These categorizations are based on content and are independent of the specific author. Thus, two or more different ways of presenting teaching for democracy may point back to the same student teacher. From an ethical perspective, it is important to point out that it is not the student teachers themselves who are analyzed in this paper, but their descriptions and perceptions, and that we are not branding them as knowledgeable, not knowledgeable, broad minded or narrow minded, but are simply problematizing the words they have chosen to use to reply to the examination question relating to theories on democracy. It is also important to note that they may know more about the topic than is visible in their texts. The study also draws on theories relating to thick (broad) and thin (narrow) democracy.

Narrow Democracy	Broad democracy
<b>Formal:</b> Mentions the importance of adhering to laws, regulations, and principles in education	<b>Formal/informal:</b> Describes the meaning of and the consequences that laws, regulations, and principles may have for people’s everyday lives and in relation to various perspectives and/or purposes. Involves awareness of power relations, inclusion/exclusion, norms, plurality/difference etc.
<b>One-dimensional:</b> Reasons in either-or fashion without any further explanation or mention of the importance of following certain methods/strategies to ‘make education democratic’ (in the form of means-end).	<b>Complex:</b> Avoids either-or explanations. Highlights the existence of various dimensions of democracy and at times problematizes methods and strategies in relation to these dimensions.



<b>Homogeneity:</b> Approaches (groups of) people and (educational) processes as homogenous (can mention plurality without describing it or taking it into account).	<b>Homogeneity/Heterogeneity:</b> Approaches (groups of) people and (educational) processes as both heterogeneous and homogenous. Provides some form of description about how this can be understood.
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**Table 1: An analytical orientation of the student teachers' written responses to the examination question studied.**

At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that the student teachers were dependent on us as teachers in that we valued and graded their answers. Also, the course content may have framed and influenced their answers to a greater degree than it would have if the question had been posed randomly to student teachers in general. Nonetheless, it is of interest to study how student teachers make sense of course content in relation to their own world views.

### **Results: Narrow and Broad Task Perceptions of Teaching for Democracy**

The results are structured in two parts: task perceptions corresponding to narrow democracy (106 answers) and broad democracy (28 answers), depending on the student teachers' descriptions. These two parts are in turn divided in sub-themes that highlight the differences between these approaches. The student teachers' task perceptions are also related to the notions of outside-in and inside-out professionalism.

#### **Task Perceptions Corresponding to Narrow Democracy**

This section highlights themes that are united in describing the democratic mission in education in ways that correspond to democracy as parliamentary principles and formal procedures. The identified themes are: a) my understanding of democracy corresponds to that which is stated in the policy documents, b) democracy is about rights, such as the right to free speech (without being contradicted), and c) in order to be democratic in education certain methods need to be followed.

#### *Understanding of Democracy Corresponds to that which is stated in the Policy Documents*

This discourse (30 answers) can be linked to student teachers' fears of not passing the course if they do not adhere to policy documents guiding the work of teachers. At the same time, it is of interest to analyze how they approach this discourse. The cases where the student teachers do not problematize the link between policy and teaching work in their texts are categorized as belonging to a narrow democratic view, with phrases such as "my thoughts on democracy relate to", "follow the rules and documents that govern our teaching", "working democratically", "the development is based on the value foundation", and "convey the value foundation".

*My thoughts about the democratic approach often agree with what we are expected to convey to the students (1rr).*

*The school has a very important function in today's society and it is therefore important that teachers follow the rules and documents that govern our teaching/.../During our teaching practice I was conscious about working democratically [as indicated in the governance document) and taking the school's values into consideration (1 c)*

Democracy is treated as obvious in the sense that it seems to exist without human involvement. It is either a “democratic” system or a system based on “oppression”.

*The school's democratic mission will never be abolished in Sweden. The day that happens, we will probably be under some kind of oppression (1ee)*

The discourse that renders policy documents equal to teachers’ democratic mission can at times also involve “democratic” action being treated as a matter of fact and self-explanatory. This is expressed in words such as: “[a]cting democratically is obvious to me” and “I try to be democratic and treat everyone equally”. The students in these cases can link democracy to words like “respect”, but do not explain what it means.

*I personally try to be very democratic and treat everyone equally/.../I think that my values agree with those of the school/.../As a teacher I try to encourage people to respect each other, because in the end I think it's all about respect and respecting others (1qq)*

In some of the descriptions there is also an explicit causal link between guidelines and the possibility of creating a better world: “guidelines...it leads to acceptance and tolerance, as well as increased opportunities and diminished injustice”.

*As a teacher I should convey the democratic values that society is governed by /.../In brief, these values are about everyone's equal value and rights, and that no one should be violated or discriminated against. People should not be treated equally, but equivalently. In my view, these are guidelines that make society a better place, with regard to the individual and society's diversity. It leads to acceptance and tolerance, more opportunities and less injustice (1i)*

At times, the desire to follow the guidelines is related to those with a different worldview than that expressed in the policy documents. In such cases, it is important to “lead them towards a more humanistic thinking”. In the following quotation there appears to be a causal link between the values expressed in the policy documents and people’s actions.

*My thoughts about democracy and the democratic view that teachers should foster and give expression to today [in accordance with the policy documents] correspond /.../As a teacher you cannot avoid meeting students with dubious standpoints that contradict the value principles, which is why it is enormously important to respond to those students with knowledge and rhetoric, and of course humility, in order not to inhibit their own beliefs. But instead lead them towards a more humanistic thinking and approach that can lead to an improved democratic mentality (1 d).*

The answers in this theme resonate with those of student teachers in earlier research, in that the primacy of predefined values provides a basis for democracy (Zyngier 2016, p. 795). This sub-theme also includes an implicit understanding of professionalism, in that the teacher’s assignment to teach for democracy is understood as an assignment to implement policy, and that policy is understood more or less as a “package” of predefined values without any formulated need for interpretation and clarification.

#### ***Teaching for Democracy is about rights (including the right of Free speech)***

A frequent theme (44 answers) in the student teachers’ written exams is that democracy is described as being more or less equal with human rights, and especially the right to free speech, without explaining this further or taking people’s everyday actions into account. This discourse can be observed through words such as “that human rights should be maintained”, “spreading respect for everyone’s common rights”, “pupils should have the same rights”, and “right to participate”.

*That human rights should be upheld and to make sure that the pupils we send out into the world have a positive intrinsic value/.../spread respect for everyone's common rights and environments (1rr)*

At times the student teachers stress the right to free speech, which they interpret as a right that everyone should be allowed to have without being contradicted. This can be found in words such as: "people in a democracy should have the right to think and act freely" and "express your views without having to worry about reprisals of any kind".

*The politically correct culture is often good, but it cannot be allowed to overstep the freedom of expression that people enjoy (1 d)*

*My thoughts about the concept of democracy are that all people should be treated equally ... But also that everyone in a democracy should have the right to think and act freely (1dd)*

The sub-theme freedom of speech also resonates with the findings of former studies. Zyngier (2016) found that the vast majority of student teachers "stated that democracy was about issues of personal freedom of opinion and fair elections" (p. 789). Zyngier's result (ibid., p. 789) is strongly related to a notion of democracy that highlights individual rights rather than national interests. When our student teachers stress rights in terms of "shoulds", a similarity with the former sub-category is visible in the data: that teaching for democracy is depicted as separate goals to be fulfilled, instead of relating them to other rights and norms, implying deliberations by the teacher.

#### ***In Order to be Democratic in Education we need to follow a certain Method***

The third theme falls within the framework of a narrow democratic view, which is created due to the student teachers' ways of linking words signaling a method to a solution or an ideal (32 answers). The phrases that are used here include: "through discussions" they become "responsible citizens", "deliberative democracy" leads to a "true democracy", "participation/.../is for me clear that it should be applied in school by using class councils" and "treat all students equally" implies that the teacher "automatically teaches [the pupils] what democracy is".

*Through discussions in the classroom, we can foster students into becoming responsible citizens (1kk)*

*Teachers should treat all students equally regardless of religion, gender, sexual orientation or skin color. When a teacher treats all students in equally fairly he or she automatically teaches [the pupils] what democracy is/.../This [gives students a chance to influence] is something that I practice today, and it is a way for the students to feel that they can contribute to a difference (1 mm)*

In earlier research on student teachers, a preference for democracy as following rules and the establishment of order has also been found (Doerre Ross Yeager 1999, p. 260; 263). In the above sub-theme, the teacher is expected to teach democracy by applying certain methods. Interpreted in terms of teaching through democracy, rather than about democracy (e.g. Biesta, 2006), the task perception of following a certain teaching method is related to a desired democratic behavior based on certain rules and methods.

These three sub-themes in the main category of narrow democracy are characterized by the reduction of democracy as a matter of policy, principles and rights with more or less causal links between practice and policy, without elaborating on how teaching for democracy should be understood when incorporating *simultaneously existing* values and norms. The three sub-themes are also related to an inside-out-professionality, in that they correspond to a notion of teaching as a more or less standardized (Stanley & Stronach 2013) approach, i.e. by

fulfilling outside demands such as policy documents, or more or less pre-defined methods of teaching. In the next section we present examples of answers in which a broader understanding of democracy is formulated.

### **Task Perceptions Corresponding to Broad Democracy**

Below are examples of task perceptions categorized as broad democracy, in the sense that the student teachers widen the focus of democracy and have a more problematizing approach to what it means. Three themes are interpreted in the analysis: a) the policy documents are in themselves not sufficient to stimulate equality, b) comparisons of concepts and reasoning and c) the importance of stimulating critical thinking.

#### ***The Policy Documents are in themselves not Sufficient to Stimulate Equality***

Some of the texts point out that policy documents are not sufficient to stimulate equality (6 answers). Thus, compared with the above theme referring to policy documents, the teachers in this theme instead highlight judgment on different coexisting dimensions. Contrary to the texts expressing an unproblematic link between policy and practice, some student teachers underline that teachers should do more than simply follow policy guidelines. For example, it is stressed that “school is [not] equal because the documents mention equality”, “without deeper knowledge/.../the [policy] content feels quite meaningless” and “but it is not as though the school is equal just because the documents stipulate equality. Students are still violated, despite the fact that we can read about people’s integrity in the curriculum”.

*I don't think it's enough for educators to simply touch on the democratic processes in the hope of fostering citizens, but that it requires more dissemination of knowledge and at the same time a questioning perspective, a constant "why?" that echoes in the students' minds every time they learn something new.../I think that educators should take it even further, consciously raise awareness about structures and explain that everyone's equal value is an objective, something that we strive towards. [We need to] discuss visions of masculinity and femininity, look at it historically and problematize the delusion that we are an egalitarian country. First knowing, then knowledge. And finally, hopefully change (1e).*

In contrast with the approach underlining loyalty to the democratic assignment in the national syllabus, this approach emphasizes teacher judgment in relation to what is not present in the syllabus. The formulations in the syllabus are in constant need of interpretation. Furthermore, it is necessary to understand the structures that the school is part of. Differentiating between written documents and the realities of social structures is a critical part of this approach (cf. Zyngier et al, p. 288-290).

#### ***Comparison between, and Explanation of, Concepts and Reasoning***

In some of the themes the student teachers do not just mention concepts and reasoning in general, but problematize them by placing them in relation to other concepts or reasoning (18 answers). For example, words and phrases like this are used: “[i]t depends on how ‘same’ is defined”, “similarities” today “when the elementary school was established”, “stereotypical expressions/.../reduces free will”, and “on the one hand/.../on the other hand”.

*I also have a certain aversion to treating everyone equally. It depends on how "equal" is defined. If I behaved in the same way to everybody and explained a mathematical concept to everyone identically not everyone would understand (100)*

A further example in this theme is a student teacher describing the assignment as teachers being capable of juggling with various perspectives at the same time:

*My thoughts about my teaching have changed during this course/.../In the democratic education that the teacher is expected to offer, thought-provoking questions should be included. This assertion has raised concerns and resulted in a shift of focus in me as a teacher/.../It is perfectly possible to assess students' skills in English at the same time as they are discussing different values (1pp)*

When task perception focuses on the problematization of the meaning of concepts and/or the relationship between concepts, teaching for democracy is characterized by an autonomous teacher judgment that highlights questions of democracy as complex relations between different human subjects and co-existing values.

### ***The Importance of Stimulating Critical Thinking***

By this, the student teachers mean that views of society should be open to critical investigation by means of qualified knowledge (4 answers).

*In view of the present political situation, with strong right-wing winds, I think that teachers need to be clearer in how we communicate what xenophobia means. We ought to ask students to critically examine the messages put forward by the various parties. It is important that students are able to examine whether party members put forward sustainable arguments or not and what they really mean, beyond the rhetoric. Xenophobia stems from ignorance, so our role is to ensure that students have knowledge (1gg)*

The task perception of stimulating critical thinking concerns how the teacher facilitates a critical investigation of the claims made by political actors in public life. Critique in this respect includes the issue of a society for all and that simple messages of rhetoric should be related to other messages that clarify their social meaning (s). The three sub-themes characterized as task perceptions corresponding to broad democracy all focus on the complexities of everyday teaching in order to teach for democracy (Edling, 2015a).

### **Discussion and a Brief Conclusion**

Although earlier research has mainly focused on student teachers' conceptions of democracy in general, this study has addressed student teachers' task perceptions of teaching for democracy in relation to teacher professionalism. Compared to other studies of student teachers in action (e.g. Banks 2001; Vélez 2012), a possible limitation of this study is that the student teachers' experiences of lived democracy are not included, and that the conceptualizing of teaching based on written texts for democracy risks omitting experiences that transcend what they are able to express in a written course assignment. However, we claim that the data provided by the student teachers is rich, in that it represents the different ways in which they understand teaching for democracy. By analyzing the student teachers' texts using discourse analysis, we have approached task perceptions through the language-use of student teachers, based on the assumption that this will have consequences for their everyday work in school.

We have examined student teachers through two analytical lenses: (1) outside-in and inside-out-professionalism and (2) task perceptions corresponding to narrow and broad democracy. Broad democracy and inside-out-professionalism share the basic theoretical and practical prerequisite of making judgments and deliberations on alternatives to co-existing values (cf. Edling, 2015a).

The high frequency of task perceptions representing a narrow notion of democracy accords with earlier studies of student teachers (Zyngier et al 2015; Zyngier 2016; Doerre Ross & Yeager 1999). As already pointed out, neither of these two basic concepts should be seen as opposing dimensions. There are justifications for outside-in-professionalism and task perceptions corresponding to a narrow notion of democracy. For example, teacher professionalism is always developed in a policy context and more or less focuses on external goals. Narrow democracy focuses on separate principles and methods that often serve the purpose of highlighting certain value dimensions. However, we argue that when task perceptions *stay* within the frame of narrow approaches, there is a risk of reducing the complex social processes that continually occur in everyday life as well as the value dimension in education. Such a risk may be significant in a culture of accountability focusing on an evaluation of separate values. Instead of pointing to the tendency for narrowness amongst the student teachers, we argue that teacher education should pay attention to the differences between the two basic approaches, both with regard to the basic models of reasoning and when pointing to the consequences for teaching for democracy.

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